THE RESPONDER
TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE • JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER
OIL SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM • SEPTEMBER 2012

Tug Libra Sinks in Port Isabel Channel

It was Monday morning, July 30, the start of a new week, and the Texas General Land Office began receiving calls from local citizens stating that red dye diesel was floating freely throughout the Port Isabel Channel and heading to the ICW. The Land Office Region 4 office responded to the site, not knowing the source or the severity of the spill. Reports stated only that diesel was in the Port Isabel Channel and nothing was known about its origins. As the Land Office arrived on the scene, a sheen was clearly visible around a CCM Ready Mix work barge, but it had no fuel on board. Upon further observation, an antenna was noticed in the water, marking where a vessel—the tug *Libra*, owned by CCM Ready Mix—rested on the bottom of the Port Isabel Channel. While the source had been found, the majority of the *Libra's* 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel had already escaped. The Land Office assessed the surrounding area and located three areas where diesel had collected: South Point Marina's boat ramp, South Shore Ice and Fuel's fuel dock, and Marine Salvage's boat dock. RM Walsdorf was hired by CCM Ready Mix to contain and remove the diesel from the water. The Land Office then created four cleanup zones, including the vessel, and prioritized each zone according to sensitive areas and the amount of diesel in those areas. Once the spilled product in each zone was contained, the Land Office provided two TDS-136 Drum Skimmers to remove the diesel from the water and into Mo-Vac vacuum trucks. After a full day, nearly all the diesel was removed from the water and a salvage plan was being developed to remove the tug. Nearly 1,500 gallons of diesel and 10 drums of oiled absorbents were recovered and disposed of properly.

A drum skimmer begins removing diesel from the waterway.

Finishing up drum skimmer operations in one of the clean up zones.

Due to the quick response of local citizens, the Land Office, and RM Walsdorf—the Discharge Cleanup Organization—the majority of the oil was contained in the vicinity of the vessel. Thankfully, there was no impact to wildlife, and no sea grass or mangroves were oiled. This was a very unfortunate loss for CCM Ready Mix, but with the help of the Land Office, U.S. Coast Guard, and local industry the response and cleanup were quick and efficient.

STCZ Donates Containment Boom to City of Port Aransas

Recently a collision between a tankship and Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit occurred approximately two miles off the Port Aransas Jetties. Although no oil spilled, Port Aransas city officials were concerned and contacted the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program. Jay Veselka, the South Texas Coastal Zone Area Assistant Regional Director, talked to city officials about response measures if a similar collision resulted in a catastrophic spill. The most obvious response would be to quickly deploy boom at the mouth of the Municipal Harbor. This action could potentially protect the entire harbor from impact. Although Port Aransas had some hard boom available, it was old, degraded and unreliable.

Subsequently, the Land Office donated 600 feet of containment boom to Port Aransas. In addition to protecting the harbor during a large oil spill, the boom can be quickly deployed when a small vessel sinks in the harbor. Quick and effective deployment of boom will lesson the impacts of a spill from either a small sunken vessel or major spill event.

It's through local partnerships such as this that commitments to protecting the environment are forged. The Land Office commends Port Aransas for its serious approach to working with the state to prevent and respond to oil spills.

From L-R: David Parsons, City of Port Aransas; Jay Veselka, GLO Oil Spill Prevention & Response Program - South Texas Coastal Zone Area; and Robert Bradshaw, City of Port Aransas stand in front of 600 ft. of hard boom donated to the city by the GLO.

The 2012 Shell Americas Response Team Exercise

On April 11th and 12th, the Shell Americas Response Team Exercise was held at the Omni Bayfront in Corpus Christi. A design team consisting of Shell and Texas General Land Office personnel as well as other federal, state, and local agencies got together months in advance to develop the exercise scenario and ensure objectives from all agencies were met. In total, over 360 personnel from eight federal, six state and eight local agencies; three industry partners, and 28 different oil spill response organizations participated in the exercise.

April 11th consisted of training, orientation, and presentations of local response capabilities for exercise participants, as well as field testing of pre-developed geographic response plans (GRPs) found in the South Texas Coastal Zone (STCZ) Area Contingency Plan (ACP). Five different GRPs were given to responders that morning. Each GRP contains useful data for oil spill protection and recovery across various environmentally and economically sensitive areas. GRPs assist in prioritizing objectives and determining the appropriate response. They contain site descriptions and information on accessibility, resources at risk, stakeholder contact information, maps, and booming recommendations. Testing predetermined strategies through actual equipment deployment helps ensure GRP feasibility, efficiency, and necessary deployment time. Boom was placed in the water at various locations to protect sensitive habitat and create spill collection points. All five deployments were successful and will be helpful in planning for actual spills. Thanks to this exercise, several GRPs developed by the STCZ have been tested and proven to be effective. Approved GRPs can be viewed on the Texas General Land Office's Texas Coastal Oil Spill Planning and Response Toolkit.

Responders deploy hard boom to test its efficiency in protecting sensitive marsh habitat during the Shell Americas Response Team Exercise.

A GRP targeting the protection of a residential district and its associated small vessels is tested off of Packery Channel.

On April 12th, exercise play began. Using the Incident Command System (ICS), the Shell Upstream Americas Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Response Plan and the ACP, responders worked through one operational period of the spill scenario. The scenario consisted of a deep water well blowout event that caused an uncontrolled release of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. The exercise included both oil spill response and source control activities. Simulated activities were played out throughout the day with various injections of issues that occur during an oil spill response. Creative solutions to injected issues and rapid decision-making were encouraged by the design team. An Incident Action Plan was developed to drive the next operational period, and all participants came away with a better understanding of what happens throughout an actual spill.

Every exercise provides a great opportunity for companies to test their response plans and personnel. Large exercises such as the Shell exercise also allow federal, state, and local agencies to come together, share information, develop closer relationships and coordination mechanisms and better understand expectations when actual events occur. Valuable training such as the Shell Americas Response Team drill better prepares the national community to efficiently respond to oil spills. As a result of events such as this one, operations within the response management system, utilization of ICS tools, and interfacing with the Unified Command become seamless.

Coastal Expo 2012 a Huge Success Despite the Rain

Once again, the prize wheel was a hit with everyone!

The Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program participated in the 2012 Texas Coastal Expo, held in June on the grounds of Moody Gardens in Galveston. The expo is an annual event sponsored by the Land Office that provides a free, family-friendly way to learn about our coastal resources while having a good time. This year's event drew more than 2,000 people. Oil Spill staff members from the local La Porte field office and the Nederland office took part in the expo, talking to the public about the importance of our coast. Visitors to the Oil Spill booth got to see an airboat brought in by the Nederland office, along with an informational display of brochures, and a demonstration of a tabletop skimmer, set up by the La Porte office. Once again, the coveted prize wheel made an appearance and was a huge hit with people of all ages, who were anxious to win water bottles, beach balls, shopping bags, backpacks and an assortment of other Land Office prizes.

Overall, the GLO Coastal Expo was a big success. The Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program enjoys the opportunity to participate in an event that continues to grow and focus on family fun, recreation, education, conservation and green energy.

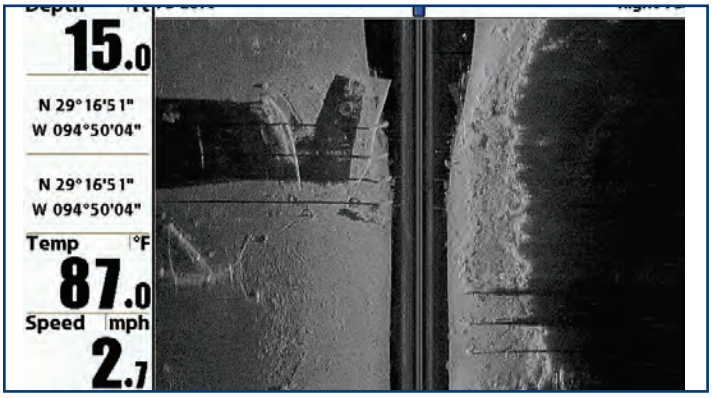
GLO Responders Gray Powell and Trey Trahan distribute information and discuss the importance of caring for our coast with a visitor.

Searching For Sunken Vessels

In 2005, House Bill 2096 granted Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson the authority to remove wrecked, derelict or substantially dismantled vessels or structures in Texas coastal waters. The Land Office Derelict Vessel and Structure Program works alongside the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program (OSPR) to identify, prioritize, remove and dispose of these vessels scattered along the Texas coast. Side-scan sonar technology is used by the OSPR Program to survey, measure, and map sunken vessels.

The OSPR Program has already had great success scanning for vessels submerged in Texas coastal waters. "It's amazing how well this system functions even on small low-lying sunken vessels," said Rich Arnhart, OSPR Regional Director. "We can scan an area the size of a football field to either side of the boat while generating clear and detailed images." The system also incorporates GPS, depth, distance, speed and water temperature information. When a possible target is identified, its location can be marked, allowing direct navigation to the site for closer review.

House Bill 2096 allows Commissioner Patterson to not only have these vessels removed, but to recover the costs of removal, storage and disposal from the owner or operator if he or she can be identified. If an owner is not able to be identified, then House Bill 2096 allows the Commissioner to accept grants, gifts and donations of property, including real property, on behalf of the Coastal Protection Fund, for use in removing vessels with unknown ownership. The General Land Office continues to take pride in caring for our coast and is always looking for new partnerships, while maintaining the existing relationships with conservation groups and other state and federal agencies.



A side-scan sonar image of two sunken vessels.

Congratulations to the 2011 OSPRA Award Winners

Crude Pipeline, LLC

Kirby Inland Marine, LP

Anthony F. (Tony) Amos
Animal Rehabilitation Keep (ARK)

National Disaster Operational Workgroup
EPA, USCG, TCEQ, TPWL & GLO

Abandoned Vessel PELE Removed

The sailing vessel PELE has a long history in the Port Isabel and Laguna Madre area. Initially, the 47-foot-long steel hull vessel was inhabited by a man in the Port Isabel area. After a few years, he was ordered by the Port Authorities to relocate out of the port. As a result, the vessel took up residence in the Laguna Madre off the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Station South Padre Island. When the vessel's owner passed away, the vessel was left abandoned. Over the years, the vessel endured tropical storms and lost its mast during Hurricane Dolly. The PELE became a safety concern and many calls were made to have the vessel removed. The Army Corps of Engineers also had concerns about the vessel's location and potential impact to navigable waterways. It had deteriorated to the point of not being seaworthy. Although the Coast Guard attempted to remove the vessel, there was no federal funding available for salvage operations. At that point the Texas General Land Office in Brownsville placarded the vessel for removal. Bill Grimes, GLO Derelict Vessel and Structure Director, initiated the order for removal and associated lengthy legal process. The Marine Safety Detachment Supervisor sent an investigation team to conduct a survey of the vessel, inspecting the hull integrity and determining if it was safe to tow. Joseph Hilliard and Gonzo Pena, Land Office personnel stationed in Brownsville, boarded the vessel prior to towing to conduct a final inspection and found the below decks were left untouched for over four years.

On May 1st, the USCG and the Land Office began the 18-mile tow up the Brownsville Ship Channel. There were multiple challenges in not only towing the vessel, but also finding a place to take it. Many of the deck towing fittings were severely deteriorated and would not withstand the tow. It was not known how the unmanned vessel would track during the tow. The USCG South Padre Island Commanding Officer provided a 41-foot boat to provide escort in case of any emergencies. A detailed towing plan was developed and included specific procedures to implement during an emergency. C.J. Mire, E.S. & H. Manager for ESCO Marine, agreed to take possession of the PELE and dismantle the vessel at no cost to the state. Through the unified efforts of the Coast Guard, Land Office and ESCO Marine, a navigation safety concern and potential cost to taxpayers was removed. The PELE is currently at ESCO Marine waiting to be dismantled.

Region 4 Responders Joseph Hilliard and Gonzalo Pena, towing the PELE to ESCO Marine.

Bilge Water Reclamation Program Receives Upgrades

A newly painted and refurbished portable, skid-mounted bilge unit is stationed in Fulton Harbor for easy vessel access.

Before the Bilge Water Reclamation Program was established by the Texas General Land Office in 1995 as part of an overall strategy to reduce non-point source pollution, floating patches of waste oil were common in coastal waters. According to the National Research Council, large spills account for about 10 percent of all the oil that ends up in our waters each year. The other 90 percent comes from non-point sources, including improper disposal of used oil products and bilge waste. A major source of oil spills is the accidental and sometimes intentional dumping of oil by vessels via bilge water. A single pint of released oil can cover one acre of water.

Many fishermen are unwilling to pay the cost for responsible disposal. To reduce the number of small volume spills, the Land Office initiated the construction and operation of bilge reclamation facilities and used oil collection stations throughout the South Texas Coastal Zone (STCZ).

The facilities and mobile units target commercial and recreational vessels with the goal of reducing the number of spills from an economically disadvantaged fishing industry. The Land Office maintains and operates the facilities while removing and recycling the oily waste from the units at no charge. It's a cost-effective way to prevent small spills that consume Land Office resources.

In 2012, six skid-mounted mobile bilge reclamation units received upgrades. One is stationed at Fulton Harbor, two are stationed at Conn Brown Harbor in Aransas Pass, two are located in the Port Aransas Municipal Marina, and one unit is at the L-Head in the Corpus Christi Municipal Marina. Upgrades included new paint, hoses, valves, and new weather-resistant stainless steel fluid-level indicators. Foreign pumps were replaced with better American-made pumps, which require less maintenance, and can be serviced by local businesses at a lower cost to the state. Two units staged in Aransas Pass were outfitted with pier-mounted remote pumps to help pump waste oil to reclamation tanks.

A yellow weatherproof box contains a remote pump, which assists in pumping oily bilge water from vessels to dockside bilge recovery units.

To use the free service, vessel operators should contact the bilge pump-out unit's associated harbor office or navigation district to make an appointment. The harbor will send trained personnel to pump out vessels as needed. When the recovery tanks are filled, the Land Office is notified for proper recycling or disposal.

Public education is a vital part of the program's success. Program flyers are available and GLO Response Officers take every opportunity to mention the service to fishermen and further promote environmentally sound boating. The results have been substantial. Over 50,000 gallons of waste oil have been collected between Fulton and Corpus Christi over the past year. The greatest measure of success is the amount of waste oil collected since the program's inception: Over 2 million gallons in STCZ Bilge Reclamation Facilities and skid-mounted recovery units. This oil might have ended up in our bays.

Thanks to the program, boaters have a free and convenient way to be environmentally responsible. The program has resulted in a substantial reduction of spills and a cleaner environment. For more information on the Bilge Water Reclamation Program, facility locations, or other information regarding the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program, please visit our website at glo.texas.gov.

Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Division Points of Contact

Austin
P.O. Box 12873
Austin, Texas
78711-2873
512-475-1575

Port Arthur
2300 Highway 365, Ste. 340
Nederland, Texas
77627-6255
409-727-7481

La Porte
11811 North D Street
La Porte, Texas
77571-9135
281-470-6597

Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive, Ste. 2425
Corpus Christi, Texas
78412-5599
361-825-3300

Brownsville
2145 EMS Lane
Brownsville, Texas
78521-2666
956-504-1417

Port Lavaca
414 Travis Street
Port Lavaca, Texas
77979-2351
361-552-8081

Report oil spills
1-800-832-8224
24 hours

The Responder is published by the Texas General Land Office.
Questions and comments may be submitted to Angela Jarvis
via email at angela.jarvis@glo.texas.gov
or by phone at 281-470-6597.

NDOW Multi-Agency Hurricane Field Exercise

The National Disaster Operations Workgroup (NDOW) recently held a multi-agency hurricane field exercise that took place in the Corpus Christi, Ingleside, Port Aransas and Padre Island areas. NDOW was created as a result of the Hurricane Ike response to improve coordination between state and federal agencies. It provides standard operational procedures and data quality objectives, one common database system, training, and exercises for coordination of multi-agency response to man-made and natural disasters. Personnel from the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program participated in the hurricane field exercise, along with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The exercise fostered team building among the response agencies both in command and in-field operations before an actual event.

An operations briefing kicked the exercise off with close to 200 people from across the state meeting at the Al Amin Center in Corpus Christi to discuss the current situation, incident objectives, weather forecasts, operations assignments, safety, planning, communications and logistics. The sites were prepared with the necessary equipment and personnel were deployed to the various locations in and around Corpus Christi. Each day the groups were given objectives and assignments to be completed that focused on assessments for drinking water and waste water facilities, oil spill assessments, and evaluation of orphan containers such as propane tanks and gas cylinders. The data for the assigned points was collected and put into the common database system in an effort to get all information from all agencies into one database.

TCEQ, EPA and Land Office personnel getting an overview of the objective and how to accomplish it.

"What we don't want to do is have the different agencies going out and duplicating the same effort," said Steve Mason, CEPP and OSC Coordinator for the EPA.

Although the hurricane exercise was an opportunity to prepare in advance, there were some real life situations managed by in-field personnel, including smoke from an ongoing brush fire (a result of a lightning strike), along with scattered thunderstorms and good old-fashioned Texas heat. All in all, the exercise improved multi-agency relationships and cooperation in the field and command post, providing an opportunity to discuss what went well and what could be improved for the future.

Meet the GLO's New Director of Research and Development


Steven Buschang leading Oil Spill Academy class in wetlands identification.

Steven Buschang, the Texas General Land Office's new Director of Research and Development and State Scientific Support Coordinator, first worked with the agency in 1997, when he helped compile the Oil Spill Response Atlas. Working under then State Scientific Support Coordinator Dr. Buzz Martin in the field of Geographic Information Systems, Buschang gathered biological data for both the upper and lower coast to populate the atlas. For two years, he and Sterling Harris of the Land Office's Information Systems division traveled the Texas coast with other staff members, holding meetings with resource managers, local officials and the general public. Their efforts would help create one of the nation's premiere spill response tools.

After completion of the data acquisition, Buschang joined the Land Office's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program as a full-time Response Officer and moved his family to Corpus Christi. He later joined the agency's Professional Services division, working his way up to a Senior Biologist position. As a Senior Biologist he worked on the management of state submerged lands and the protection of Texas natural resources. During this time he worked closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

In 2009, Buschang returned to Oil Spill and worked as a Senior Response Officer in the South Texas Coastal Zone, responding to incidents like the Eagle Otome spill, Superior Crude spill, and hurricanes Dolly and Ike. He served as a field aide to Buzz Martin, working on the Texas Coastal Oil Spill Planning and Response CD Toolkit, Area Committee pre-planning, identification of sensitive areas and best management practices for spill response.

In the spring of 2012, Buschang and his family were once again on the move, returning to Austin after becoming Director of Research and Development and State Scientific Support Coordinator. As the State SSC, he's responsible for managing ongoing Land Office projects, including the Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS), and the Oil Spill Planning and Response Toolkit. The toolkit incorporates data from the state's Coastal Environmental Sensitivity Index and Habitat Priority mapping project. Buschang is also engaged in operational ocean observations and forecasts as the Land Office program manager for TABS and the associated modeling program. As an emergency responder, Buschang takes the lead for the state in providing on-scene technical and scientific support to oil spill response activities. In this role he helps identify protection priorities and manage Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Teams (SCAT), aerial reconnaissance, and alternative countermeasure activities. Buschang currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System (GCOOS).

Continued on Page 6

Meet the GLO's New Director of Research and Development

Continued from Page 5

Buschang earned his undergraduate degree in Marine Biology at Southwest Texas State University. He earned his Master's Degree from Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi in Environmental Science while working for the Land Office, with his project centering on Human Impacts to Avian and Marsh Species. After completion of his Master's, Buschang taught classes at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi as an Adjunct Faculty member for the Environmental Science Department, teaching both graduate and undergraduate classes in Environmental Regulations and Environmental Assessment. He still sits as a committee member for one graduate student.

While in Corpus Christi, Buschang served on the city of Corpus Christi's steering committee for brownfields redevelopment, a grant and revitalization project that promotes the clean up and reuse of contaminated former industrial sites, as viable and productive business, residential and industrial sites.

Buschang and his family have found a home in Austin, but still plan to spend quality time along the Texas Riviera.

New Orleans to Host Clean Gulf Conference 2012

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson checks out his agency's Oil Spill Prevention and Response exhibit at last year's Clean Gulf Conference.

More than 2,000 emergency responders are set to converge from November 13-15, 2012 in New Orleans, Louisiana for the 22nd Annual CLEAN GULF Conference & Exhibition. Key professionals and decision makers from throughout the Gulf Coast and beyond will come together to view the latest products, services and technologies, as well as hear about the latest trends and developments in the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Industry. The CLEAN GULF Conference features five tracks focused on Response, Planning & Preparedness, Regulatory & Policy Update, Deepwater Prevention & Preparedness, and Lessons Learned and the Way Ahead. This year's conference will kick off with Keynote Speaker James Watson, Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, followed by the Mega Session, Is There Really "One Gulf of Mexico"? Transboundary Challenges in Deep-Water Safety. The CLEAN GULF exhibit hall will feature 250+ service companies, OSROs, and regulatory agencies showcasing their latest solutions and technologies.

CLEAN GULF is co-hosted by the Texas General Land Office, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and is in association with the U.S. Coast Guard and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. For more information, visit www.cleangulf.org or visit our website at www.glo.texas.gov/oilspill.

Vessel Registration Requirements

Owners or operators of certain vessels operating in Texas coastal waters must submit vessel-specific information to the Texas General Land Office. The required information includes 24-hour contact information, vessel identification, gross tonnage, and capacity for fuel and oil for each vessel covered by the notification.

Vessels operating in Texas coastal waters are still being found not to have submitted any of this information to the Land Office.

If you are uncertain if this rule applies to your company, you merely need to answer the following questions:

- Is your company the owner or operator of a vessel required by the Oil Pollution Act to have a current vessel response plan aboard?
- Is your company the owner or operator of a vessel in excess of 400 gross tons and required by the International Maritime Organization to have a current shipboard oil pollution emergency plan aboard?

If you answered "yes" to either of these, then the rule definitely applies to your company, assuming your vessel(s) operates in Texas coastal waters. The simplest way to meet the requirements is to submit the information and maintain it through our website at www.glo.texas.gov.

To establish a company account and obtain a password, please contact Peggy Spies, Director of Maritime Affairs at peggy.spies@glo.texas.gov or by phone at 512-463-6554.

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act allows a civil penalty of not less than $100 and no more than $10,000 per violation for each day of violation, not to exceed $125,000. Vessel owners and operators are encouraged to review the registration and notification requirements to ensure they're in compliance.

This year, the Land Office will use PortVision, a Web-based system for monitoring real-time vessel activity along Texas coastal waters to assist in determining commercial vessel compliance. Non-compliance could prompt a visit by Land Office personnel.